

FHS REVIEW 2023 1 and 1a

Comments to Editor:

This poem is a poignant reminiscence describing a teen giving birth the night of her senior prom, abandoned to her fate by her indifferent parents. The young mother-to-be takes an inner tube to the local river and delivers a premature infant, who survives to become the poem's narrator.

There is much to like in the poem, which is moving and well-crafted. The use of the second person voice reinforces the indissoluble bond between the narrator and her deceased mother. Without ever sentimentalizing the poverty of the narrator's upbringing (in a "rickety trailer on cinderblocks"), the poem captures the beauty of river, stones, moon, fireflies and trees, an "ancient" environment that welcomes the new baby's arrival on earth. It also conveys that for the story-teller, now a city dweller, something of the beauty of growing up close to nature has been lost.

What is not lost is the inheritance bequeathed by the mother's constant sacrifice (cutting coupons, rationing gas and even stealing shoes) to ensure her child's survival and thriving. After her death from cancer, the narrator reflects on the mother's legacy of grit and determination and is filled with gratitude toward the woman who made this possible. Grabbing something to eat before starting their factory job, the narrator opens a bagel (much as the mother opened her legs to birth her baby) and finds (just as did the mother) - "everything," all that she inherited from her now-dead mother. The poem is full of ironic juxtapositions, such as the mother giving birth while her classmates dance to "Wish You Were Here."; and the boyfriend, identified only as "the tuxedo," fleeing as he discards the bouquet intended for his erstwhile date.

A couple of small questions. I like the curiosity that the title provokes in the reader: what does it mean? But why is it "Born To a Tube" rather than "Born In a Tube"? The tube never took the mother's place, yet the choice of preposition seems to minimize the narrator's obvious devotion to her mother. Also, although I know that "shredding" in popular parlance can refer to a certain aggressive style of athletic pursuit or a very rapid form of guitar-playing, to me figuring out its relationship to cancer was initially a little distracting, and I wonder if another word might be more effective.

Overall, I really liked this poem and support its acceptance for publication.

Comments to Author:

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These are not criticisms so much as personal preferences. I appreciated the interesting perspective and found its emotions understated yet genuine. It made me think about young single mothers and the sometimes unrecognized or under-appreciated gifts they bestow on their offspring.

Comments to Editor:

The author made judicious changes that have improved the poem. It was already a very good poem and now it is clearer and therefore better. I have no further critiques and recommend publication wholeheartedly.

Comments to Author:

Thank you for your careful consideration of my and the other reviewer's suggestions. Your revisions and explanations are thoughtful and bolster the meaning of the narrative. I liked your poem when I first read it, and now I like it more!